



Important Facts Related to the Proposed Hunting and Fishing License Package

Hunting and Fishing License Package Work Group

License fees are set by the Michigan Legislature, not the Department of Natural Resources or the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). The NRC formed a work group to study license fees for the DNR. The work group, comprised of representatives from many of the major conservation groups in the state, recommended the proposed restructuring in license fees to the NRC. The NRC approved and accepted the recommendations and is working with the Legislature toward restructuring hunting, fishing and trapping fees. No action has yet been taken by the Legislature.

Additionally, the work group recommended to:

1. Restore cuts from the previous two years to maintain sound scientific management of Michigan fish and wildlife resources.
2. Accomplish only very limited, targeted additions to programs to meet emerging needs.
3. Provide discounts to seniors (20%) and youth (50%) at levels that mirror those provided elsewhere in society to seniors and youth. Those discounts may not be applicable to all licenses/applications (e.g., application drawings).
4. Charge a higher fee to nonresidents, acknowledging that they contribute less per capita to conservation than Michigan residents through other revenue sources, but also recognizing the value of the tourism industry to Michigan.
5. Lower the age at which people need a fishing license to 16.
6. Provide DNR authority to discount all licenses.
7. Support inclusion of a youth's (under 16) fishing catch as part of an adult's fishing bag limit unless the youth has purchased a voluntary fishing license.
8. Commit to work with other conservation interests to craft a long-term, stable funding approach for conservation in Michigan.

Facts at a Glance

- Hunting, fishing and trapping are an integral part of Michigan's cultural landscape. These activities are cornerstones to Michigan's quality of life and traditions passed down across generations that link family members together and foster a stewardship ethic regarding natural resources.
- DNR is directly responsible for managing 4.5 million acres -- 12% of Michigan's land mass.

- DNR has conservation responsibilities for fish and wildlife resources across the state's 37 million acres, including more than 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 of rivers and streams, and 38,575 square miles of the Great Lakes.
- One of every six Michigan residents hunts, fishes and/or traps.
- Recreation related to fish and wildlife conservation is vital to Michigan's economy, directly supporting more than 33,000 jobs.
- More than 76% of the DNR's budget comes from state restricted funds, one of which is the Game and Fish Protection Fund (hunting and fishing license fees). That fund provides nearly one-third of that total.
- DNR receives little money from general tax dollars (General Fund). In fact, out of the DNR's total budget, only 9% comes from the General Fund -- and half of that 9% goes to local governments, with **only the remaining 4.5% to conservation.**
- In contrast, just 10 years ago, 23.3% of DNR's budget came from the General Fund.
- Over the past 20 years, the number of anglers has dropped 21.7%, from 1,483,910 to 1,161,432 and the number of hunters has dropped 14.3%, from 925,332 to 789,244.
- Decreases in license sales and increased management responsibilities, combined with continual inflationary costs in the state budget, have caused a rapid depletion of the Game and Fish Protection Fund and will jeopardize DNR's ability to protect, manage and conserve the natural resources of our state.
- For example, the number of conservation officers in the field has declined from 195 in 1995 to 140 in 2006. Funding cuts also have reduced patrol hours despite the fact that the number of calls to the Report All Poaching hotline increased by more than 21% over the same period.
- DNR has initiated \$8 million in program reductions over the past three years.
- Since 1996, the number of filled positions in the DNR has declined from 1,620 to 1,477.
- If nothing changes, Game and Fish Protection Fund will have a deficit of \$9 million-\$11 million by 2007-08, and by 2009-10, this deficit balloons to \$45.9 million.
- Hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing contribute more than \$3 billion annually to our economy.
- Cuts in conservation programs not only threaten our fish, wildlife and public land resources, they also threaten Michigan's economy.
- Last time hunting, trapping and fishing license fees were increased by Legislature was in 1996.
- If simply adjusted for inflation in 2006-07 dollars, the \$7.50 fee hunters paid for a deer license in 1971 should be \$36.03 today, more than \$21 over the current fee.
- Proposal 1, approved by voters in November, **DOES NOT** provide any additional funding for the DNR. It only protects key DNR restricted funds, including the Game and Fish Protection Fund, from being used by the Legislature for other purposes.